TRIBUTE



TO GENERAL

SIKORSKI

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Mr. Churchill's Tribute to General Sikorski

We learned yesterday that the cause of the United Nations had suffered a most grievous loss. (Hear, hear.) It is my duty to express the feelings of this House, and to pay my tribute to the memory of a great Polish patriot and staunch ally, General Sikorski. (Sympathetic cheers.) His death in the air crash at Gibraltar was one of the heaviest strokes we have sustained.



General Sikorski opening the first meeting of the National Council in Paris, January, 1940.

BIBLIOTEKA POLSKA W LONDYNIE
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Headquarters: General Sikorski in Angers, the seat of the Polish Government in France, 1940.

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From the first dark days of the Polish catastrophe and the brutal triumph of the German war machine until the moment of his death on Sunday night he was the symbol and the embodiment of that spirit which has borne the Polish nation through centuries of sorrow and is unquenchable by agony. When the organised resistance of the Polish Army in Poland was beaten down, General Sikorski's first thought was to organise all Polish elements in France to carry on the struggle, and a Polish army of over 80,000 men presently took its station on the French fronts. This army fought with the utmost resolution in the disastrous battles of 1940. Part fought its way out in good order into Switzerland, and is to-day interned there. Part marched resolutely to the sea, and reached this island.



Here General Sikorski had to begin his work again. He persevered, unwearied and undaunted. The powerful Polish forces which have now been accumulated and equipped in this country and in the Middle East, to the latter of whom his last visit was paid, now await with confidence and ardour the tasks which lie ahead. General Sikorski commanded the devoted loyalty of the Polish people now tortured and struggling in Poland itself. He personally directed that movement of resistance which has maintained a ceaseless warfare against German oppression in spite of sufferings as terrible as any nation has ever endured. (Hear, hear.) This resistance will grow in power until, at the approach of liberating armies, it will exterminate the German ravagers of the homeland.

I was often brought into contact with General Sikorski in those years of war. I had a high regard for him, and admired his poise and calm dignity amid so many trials and baffling problems. He was

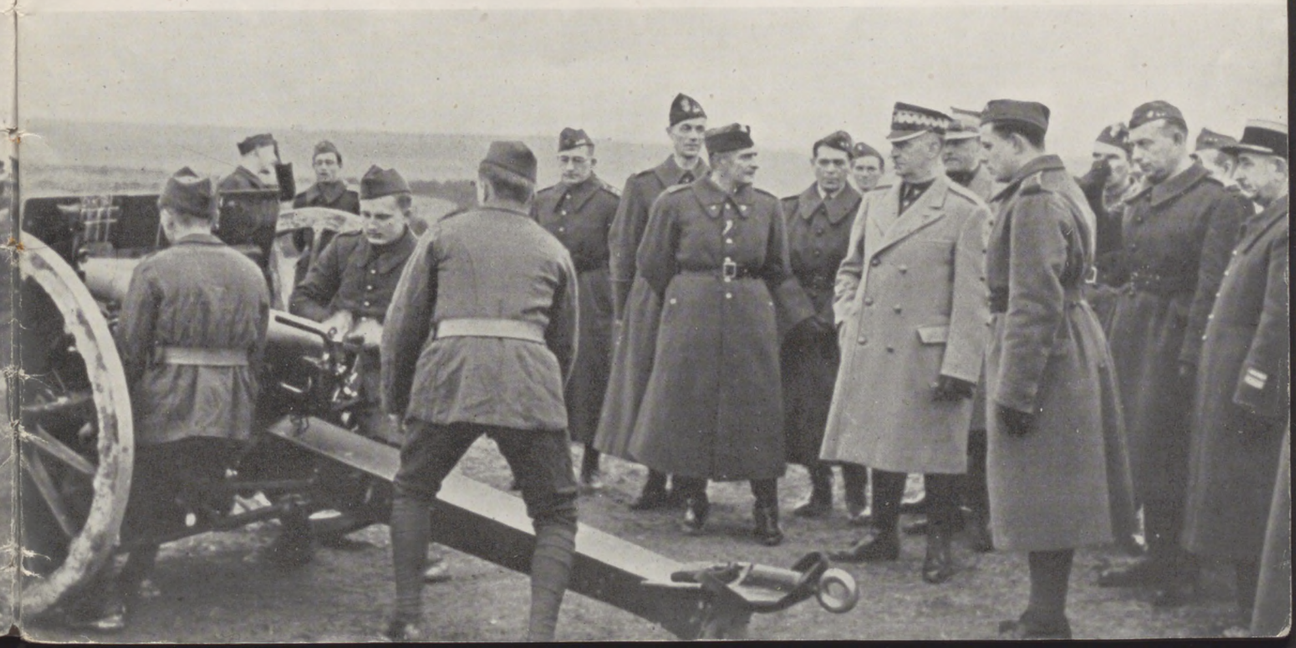


Polish Government Session in France.

" We shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields. . . " General Sikorski



inspecting Polish Fighter Squadrons and Artillery Units, during the Battle of France.



a man of remarkable pre-eminence, both as a statesman and a soldier. His agreement with Marshal Stalin of July 30th, 1941, was an outstanding example of his political wisdom. Until the moment of his death he lived in the conviction that all else must be subordinated to the needs of the common struggle and in the faith that a better Europe will arise in which a great and independent Poland will play an honourable part. (Cheers.) We British here and throughout the Commonwealth and Empire, who declared war on Germany because of Hitler's invasion of Poland and in fulfilment of our guarantee, feel deeply for our Polish allies in their new loss.

A visit to Polish and French air units near Lyons, France.





Poland for Ever. Lord Hamilton of Dalzell greeting General Sikorski after his arrival from France. Scotland, 1940.

We express our sympathy to them, we express our confidence in their immortal qualities, and we proclaim our resolve that General Sikorski's work as Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief shall not have been done in vain. (Cheers.) The House would, I am sure, wish also that its sympathy should be conveyed to Madame Sikorski, who dwells here in England, and whose husband and daughter have both been simultaneously killed on duty.

Mr. Churchill in the House of Commons,
July 7th, 1943



"We start Again." General Sikorski alighting from the special 'plane that brought him to England after the collapse of France.



Allies in conference. Two out of many meetings between Polish and British statesmen.



At No. 10. Mr. Winston Churchill and General Sikorski with members of the Polish and British Governments in the garden at No. 10 Downing Street.





The Queen and the General. Their Majesties' visit to the First Polish Corps, Scotland, 1941.

General Sikorski

by Karol Estreicher

BY cruel fate General Wladyslaw Sikorski was killed a year ago in an air crash near Gibraltar. His death came at a moment when Poland needed him perhaps more than ever before, for though the war situation had begun to improve, even this did not save Poland from suffering many setbacks.

Sikorski was a statesman, outstanding among the leaders of the Second World War. This position he owed to his character, his faith in ultimate victory, his clearness of decision and his energy in all his actions. I should like to speak about him, pointing out not only what he meant to Poland, but to the whole of Europe ; and to show the reader the values which he brought with him and which will forever be connected with his name.

This is his life :—

He was born in 1881, at a time when Poland was not even spoken of in European politics. Her name had been blotted out from the map and she was partitioned between Russia, Austria and Germany. The Polish nation, however, never accepted such a situation and towards the end of the 19th century Sikorski's generation believed as firmly as previous generations had done in an ultimate liberation of Poland. Maybe the younger generation, in whose political life Sikorski took an active part, believed in it even more sincerely and more strongly before the outbreak of the First World War, hoping that the fight between her three oppressors would bring freedom to the Polish nation.

Scotland's Shield. General Sikorski inspecting Polish troops detailed to defend the Scottish shore in the event of invasion.





Two Soldiers. General Sikorski and General Sir Alan Brooke, C.-in-C., Home Forces.



General Sikorski presenting the colours to the Polish Highland Brigade, Spring, 1940.



The General's Signature.

After leaving school, Sikorski entered the Technical Institute in Lvov. As he himself often used to tell his friends, he did not go in for humanistic studies or law because he foresaw that the future of the world lay above all in the technical developments brought about by the 20th century. In his later life his technical qualifications as a road and bridge builder were a great help. They were useful in his career as a soldier and also, as we shall see later, in his career as a statesman. They taught him the power of swift decision, gave him a sense of reality and the conviction that the fate of mankind depends chiefly on man himself.

Long before the First World War, Sikorski had already begun his military studies. He was one of the organisers of the underground forces formed in those parts of Poland which had been occupied by the Austrians. At the outbreak of war in 1914, a National Committee was formed in Cracow which soon afterwards led to the organisation of the Legions of Joseph Pilsudski, and in that Committee, thirty-three-year-old Colonel Sikorski became chief of the military department and immediately began to act with dynamic energy.

The idea of the National Committee in Cracow was to create Polish military units which, during the last phase of the war, would play a deciding part in the fate of the Polish nation.

After the war, Sikorski occupied an important position in the organisation of the Polish State. He fought for the liberation of Lvov and Przemysl in 1919, and in the Polish-Russian war of 1920, gaining great popularity in Poland as an outstanding soldier. During the Russian offensive against Warsaw, he commanded the Northern Army, winning one of the decisive battles of the war. He was not only a victorious general in the front lines, but he also became a prominent organiser of the young Polish army

during the post-war period, when he was chief of the General Staff.

In 1922, internal political conflicts in Poland put Sikorski at the head of the government. Within a short time he carried out essential reforms and guided foreign policy into a direction which gained the approval and co-operation of the League of Nations, while he also obtained recognition of Poland's Eastern frontiers by Great Britain, France and the U.S.A. As a Prime Minister he won universal respect and popularity in Poland.

He was a democrat and a supporter of Parliament. In spite of the many facilities which an anti-constitutional regime would bring with it he never changed his convictions. They estranged him completely from the party of Marshal Pilsudski. While this political group was in power, Sikorski remained in opposition. He foresaw that this system was not the right one for Poland, and that events would take a different course. The catastrophe of 1939 found him at the head of the opposition, and consequently the whole nation looked to him for guidance.

These are Sikorski's activities during the Second World War :—

While remaining in political opposition Sikorski had not been inactive. It was his conviction that political parties are a necessity in the life of a nation and that their right balance constitutes a parliamentary system. He was trying to smooth out the differences between the various parties and to unite them before the outbreak of the coming world war; he was looking for those who would support his outlook at home as well as abroad. He made friends with Ignacy Paderewski, the statesman and musician, and with Vincent Witos, the leader of the Polish peasants. He also worked as a writer, publishing books dealing with a future war and strategical problems, besides writing political articles for various papers. He



General Sikorski with Mr. Winant, Mr. Eden, and Mr. A. Drexel Biddle.



The General and Mr. Ernest Bevin.



Polish-Norwegian friendship.



War and Economics. The General with Mr. Hugh Dalton.



How many miles to Warsaw ? King Peter of Yugo-Slavia, with President Raczkiewicz and General Sikorski at a Polish Air Station.

"Who minds bad weather ?" The Prime Minister inspecting Polish troops.





H.M. King George and General Sikorski chatting with Polish troops.

"Together we Stand...." President Benes and General Sikorski.





"Grim and gay." Mrs. Churchill, the Prime Minister and the General.

warned Poland and the whole of Europe of the growing power of Germany. Sikorski was well known in political circles in France as an irreconcilable enemy of Fascism and Hitlerism. It will be worth while to remind the reader here that the attempt made in 1935 by the dethroned King Alphonse XIII to win over Sikorski to an "anti-Bolshevist Crusade" in Spain failed completely. Sikorski saw clearly that the real danger in Europe was not radical socialism, but reactionary politics which were weakening Europe, and which made her unable to defend herself against the growing Teutonic doctrine of brute force.

Therefore, it was not surprising that when Sikorski found himself in Paris on September 24th, 1939, he should be chosen as the head

"Nil desperandum."

of the new Polish Government and Commander-in-Chief. In this way he united in himself two of the most important state positions which he interpreted, not in the manner of a dictator, but as a ruler who needed such powers to help him to act decisively with the Allies at time of critical difficulty.

He immediately formed a government on a democratic basis. It included representatives of the four most important political parties and several specialists. Sikorski's government summoned





In front of Tobruk.



General Sikorski in Gibraltar with Polish soldiers escaped from Germany.



Sir Archibald Sinclair inspecting a squadron of Polish fighters.

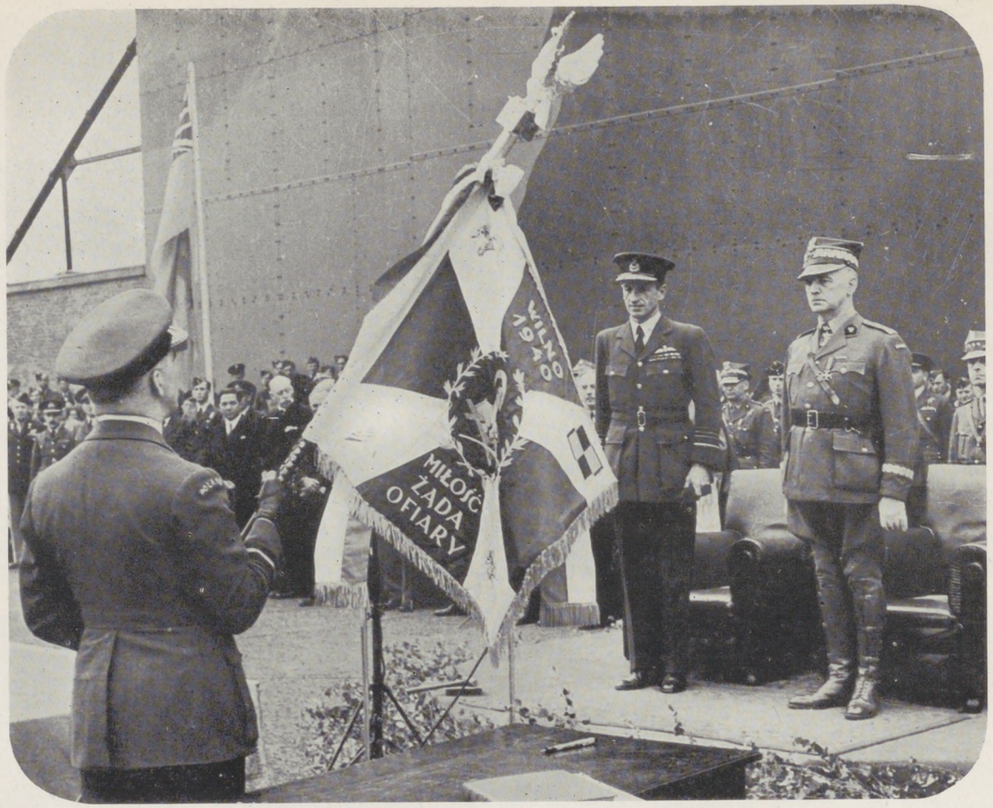
a National Council in exile as a kind of provisional parliament, proving that the Government wished to exercise its authority in a democratic spirit.

At Sikorski's appeal, Poles from all over the world began to arrive in France and the Middle East to join the newly organised Polish army ; most of them had managed to escape from Poland. Sikorski considered it of great importance that Poland's war effort should be considerable and it is due to him that the Polish forces

They defended London. General Sikorski decorating Polish fighters who took part in the Battle of Britain.







Flag of Freedom. Presenting the Standard embroidered by the Polish women of Wilno and smuggled out of Poland, to a squadron of the Royal Air Force.

have grown to such an extent, and are to-day fighting on all fronts, and gaining universal respect.

Sikorski's most important political contacts, however, were those made during the Second World War, with regard to Polish foreign policy. Already while organising the Polish army in November 1939, he went to London.

He had no doubt that the war would spread over the whole world. Speaking of the present war, he said :

" This is no ordinary war for material interests or territorial ambitions. It does not resemble those conflicts of the past, the





General Sikorski visiting naval units fighting side by side with the Royal Navy.

General Sikorski signing the Soviet-Polish agreement, July 30, 1941.

In Moscow. General Sikorski and Marshal Stalin, signing the Polish-Soviet Declaration, December 4, 1941.







General Sikorski broadcasting on Polish-Soviet relations.

outcome of which was decided in a single battle. Whether the world will achieve the realisation of the highest ideals or be defeated by a primitive barbaric materialism that reduces men to beasts depends on the outcome of this war. We are fighting a mortal war which will decide the fate of nations, of continents and of the whole world. Such is the true nature of this war.''

He foresaw Germany's attack on the neutral countries, America's entry into the war and the attack on Russia. With this constant desire to find understanding for the Polish cause throughout the world, repeatedly attending conferences with all the allies,

Sikorski was truly one of the architects of the confederation of the United Nations.

At that time Sikorski also began to organise the underground movement in Poland. Underground fighting, famous in Polish history, once more activated the whole nation.

During the defeat of France, Sikorski did not give way to despair and doubts. His arrival in England and Churchill's quick decision after a conference with him on June 18th, 1940, to evacuate the Polish army from France, enabled half of it to get away safely.

Sikorski's faith in an ultimate victory for Great Britain never wavered for an instant. He represented the Polish nation which in spite of the most cruel persecutions and the most terrible oppression, remained faithful to a cause for which it had begun to fight on September 1st, 1939. Polish airmen distinguished themselves during the Battle of Britain ; the Polish army in Scotland began to re-organise and prepare for a possible German invasion, and units of the Polish Navy were fighting side by side with the victorious Royal Navy.

All through 1940 and 1941 Sikorski worked untiringly to further diplomatic relations between the allies. He was a warm supporter of a Central European federation, especially of a close relationship between Poland and Czechoslovakia.

His visits to the United States and his collaboration with the allied leaders showed him to be not only an outstanding member of the Polish nation, but also one of Europe's foremost personalities.

Then Germany's star began to decline and the position of the allies improved considerably. For a long time Sikorski had been expecting a German attack on Russia and had foreseen the latter's heroic and victorious fight. He soon made it clear that he was willing to come to an understanding with Russia in the name of the



After the Pact. General Sikorski visiting the newly formed Polish forces and a detachment of Polish A.T.S., Russia, 1941.





General Sikorski with General Anders, O.C. Polish Forces in Russia, 1941.



Tobruk.

Polish Government, and that he was prepared to forget all neighbourly misunderstandings alienating Poland from Russia. This would enable the two nations to fight side by side against the enemy of all humanity. The Russian-Polish agreement of 1941 and the subsequent meeting with Stalin in Moscow were largely due to Sikorski's political realism, of which he gave constant proof during his lifetime. The Polish-Russian pact facilitated the mutual understanding and closer relationship between Russia, Britain and America. Although in 1943, for various reasons, the agreement had broken down, it remained none the less a foreshadow of a future when the misunderstanding between two Slavonic nations would come to an end and the desire for collaboration would prevail.



Arrival in America.



General Sikorski with Mayor La Guardia.

Sikorski died at the very moment when his country most needed his help in the difficult situation in which it found itself after the failure of Polish-Russian agreement. His death meant an irreparable loss to Poland, a loss which will be even more noticeable after the war, when the Polish State will have to be rebuilt. There still remain, however, Sikorski's principles, his methods of political action and his character, which will be an example to Poles for many years to come.

And finally:—

Although he was a soldier by choice and profession, his ideas were anything but militaristic. He knew the difficult art of distinguishing between the position of a politician and a soldier, always finding the right balance between the two. He was a great



New York City's welcome.

believer in law and exact legal structures and a practical and realistic man, ready to interpret a situation, and to compromise between theory and practice.

As a politician, he was a statesman without obsessions. He never looked back on the past, but preferred to look forward to a brighter future.



Paderewski, General Sikorski and the present Prime Minister Mikolajczyk.

"How are you, General?" A friendly handshake with President Roosevelt.

Sikorski combined in his character all that was best in the Polish nation. He understood not only his own people, but he envisaged the world of the future as well. That was the reason why he so easily found support in carrying out his ideas, and in Great Britain he made friends amongst politicians of all parties. He moved with the times in social as well as international questions.

Wladyslaw Sikorski bequeathed much to those he left behind, and the fact that Poland's name became famous during this war was largely due to him. Great Britain lost in him a great friend and one of the champions of a just and wise world policy.





Flower Day in Mexico.



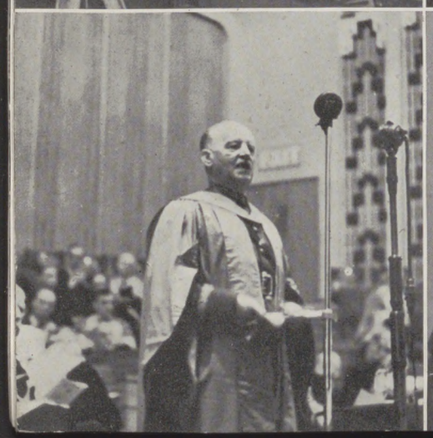
General Sikorski and his daughter Sophie.

General Sikorski speaking.





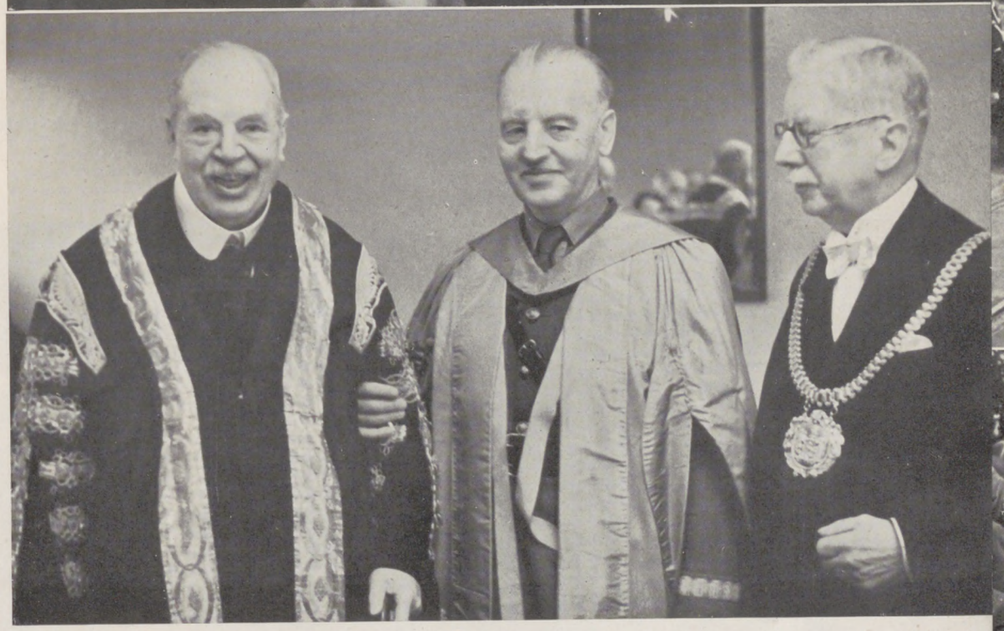












Doctor's Degree at the University of St. Andrews.

At Liverpool with Lord Derby.



"But westward, look, the land is bright. . . ." General Sikorski in the Middle East.

Planning for Italy.

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General Sikorski with his beloved only daughter.



His last journey to England.





The Last Landing.

". . . nothing but well and fair, And what may quiet us in a death so noble." (Milton : "Samson Agonistes.")



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KRAJ W ŻAŁOBIE



Stosownie do zarządzenia Pełnomocnika ządu na Kraj stolica, a wraz z nią „cała olska postanowiła w skupieniu i powadze czcić pamięć ś. p. gen. Sikorskiego dwutyodniową żałobą. W dniu pogrzebu na muich i licznych świątyniach Warszawy ukały się klepsydry żałobne — w dniu tym dbyło się też wiele cichych nabożeństw dprawianych za spokój duszy Zmarłego.

Cała prasa polska w okresie żałoby pierwsze szpalty swych dzienników poświęciła pamięci gen. Sikorskiego, zamieszczając obszerne życiorysy i artykuły, omawiające rolę zmarłego Premiera i Wodza Naczelnego.

Te głosy prasy, które zdążyliśmy otrzymać przed oddaniem numeru do druku, przytaczamy w wyjątkach.

While the funeral was taking place in England, when Mr. Churchill was paying tribute to him in Parliament, all Poland mourned. On the walls of Warsaw posters appeared bringing news of his death. We reproduce here the front page of a leading Polish underground paper. It salutes his memory.

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